

[P. 379, B]

RITUAL IN SUBSISTENCE

224
789

When I asked my informant the Washo word for this mixture he evaded the question.

"I don't think they had a word for it. They didn't talk about it, just used it. If you used it you had to carry some medicine to work against it, 'cause if you got a scratch of that mixture and didn't have this other stuff [the counter agent], you was a goner.

"A long time ago one man would hunt. Some of them fellas was superstitious about using real deer horns, so they would make horns of manzanita and then cover up with a deer hide. They'd move along . . . taking a long time, just like a deer. That old buck would try to get to the side away from the wind to smell you, but you kept circling around so he wouldn't smell you. Finally you could get real close, maybe only three, four feet . . . going around making sounds just like a deer. Sometimes them bucks would really believe you and want to fight and then it was dangerous. When you was close you shot that arrow into the deer right behind the shoulder blade. That way when he jumped, the shoulder blade comes back and breaks off the shaft. The man would grab the shaft and suck off the blood. Then he'd make a little fire on a flat stone and when it was hot he'd sweep off the fire and spit that on the stone and it would bubble up and disappear. Then you'd go after the deer and you'd find him laying there with blood bubbling out of his nose just like that blood bubbled on the stone."

[777]
[343]

Other rituals related to hunting dealt with the loss of hunting luck. To regain one's luck in hunting, a sweat lodge was built, consisting of a temporary brush shelter (588-759).

[824]
[777]

To insure luck it was common in the old days to bathe and rub the leaves of a certain mountain plant over one's body. Other Washo carried a plant on their persons while hunting, to insure luck. I was unable to get my informant to give me the Washo name of this plant. Certain other special medicines are reported.

One man, it is hinted, has a medicine which he rubs on his gun to insure good aim. Old hunters are said to have obtained medicine from the Miwok which would put deer to sleep. Today this medicine is a subject of esoteric humor between my informant and his son-in-law. The latter insists that the bear has a medicine which will put his father-in-law to sleep because he came upon the old man asleep under a tree one day when he should have been hunting. Although the Washo depended on ritual to assist them in hunting, it is clear that they considered a successful hunter the possessor of power beyond simple magic. Like curers or dreamers, certain hunters obviously had been blessed by spirits and were able to outthink and outsmart animals and therefore were particularly good hunters. At least some of the Washo who hunt today attempt to give the impression that their success is based on something more than luck or skill.

[522]

[787]

224

[136]

Antelope (27a-73).—There are no Washo alive today who can remember antelope surrounds. It appears that most of the Washo territory was not inhabited by antelope, lying as it does between the northern and

Stewart: Washo-Northern Paiute Peyotism

101 N

usually the mama. Before chewing, the buttons are lined up on the hand, and a silent prayer is offered "through them." After each is masticated, it is spit into the hands and formed into a ball. While resting on the open palm, this pellet is motioned toward the fire, then thrown into the mouth. The hand remains before the mouth a moment, then is passed back over the forehead and hair. The throat and chest are rubbed with a downward motion and patted. After the peyote is swallowed, expectorating into the hand and rubbing saliva over the head are common. Frequently, Ben Lancaster and Sam Dick chew hard peyote buttons and form them into pellets for others to swallow, especially the sick, a curing prayer being offered and cedar smoke being fanned over the patient.

The drumming and singing continue, but anyone eating peyote stops the drum's progress. No one is allowed to pass between the altar and a person eating peyote or praying. Oral prayers are made through a cigarette, usually part sage, rolled by the chief, and lighted from the fire stick. Crying is common during prayers, which are given in Washo, Paiute, Shoshone, or English. The leaders pray in English, and English phrases are incorporated into Indian prayers. Singing and drumming continue during the prayers, which usually end at a moment of quiet while drum and staff are passed.

At dawn the chief recalls the drum and staff, and sends the host's wife or another woman, often his own wife, to get the water and food for the peyote breakfast. As soon as the fire chief has pushed the ash crescent toward the sand half-moon, filling its concave side, arranged the fire, and cleaned the altar and the ground around it, he also leaves to assist. When the food is at the door, the chief starts the final series of songs, the food and water being aligned between fire stick and door after his first song. The woman who brought the food kneels upon a blanket east of the last vessel. The last three songs completed, all paraphernalia are spread on handkerchiefs and scarfs, the tips of all feathers pointing toward their owner's left. Near the north end of the crescent on his altar cloth, the chief places staff, feathers, gourd, cedar bag, drum, and drumstick.

The cedarman sprinkles cedar on the fire, and the kneeling woman, by extending her arms and cupping her hands, draws its smoke to her chest and to the food. The chief, in the meantime, makes a sage-and-tobacco cigarette, which is carried to the woman by the cedarman, who also hands her the fire stick. Her prayer is one of the longest of the meeting. This and the midnight blessing are the only prayers followed by one by the chief, who uses the same cigarette from which the chief drummer and cedarman have also taken four puffs. The chief's prayer varies from his opening prayer only with a blessing for food.

As the cedarman places the cigarette butt against the crescent, the woman spills water on the ground, passes the bucket to the nearest person south of the door, and takes her original place. The peyote breakfast passes around the group in the order of its arrangement between the fire and the woman: water, closest the fire, fruit, boiled rice, and meat.

Water is again sprinkled over the paraphernalia and rubbed over the body, and informal conversation begins. As soon as the food goes around, the vessels are placed on the ground as before; then taken out by the fire chief. At this point the chief removes the sage and eagle feathers from his staff, takes the chief peyote from the moon, and places some paraphernalia in his satchel. The drum is dismantled by the chief drummer, the kettle containing the charcoal-blackened water and the drumstick being circulated clockwise around the meeting, each Indian touching his head, limbs, chest, and any weak part of his body with drops of water carried by the stick. Some suck four drops of water from the end of the drumstick; many drink from the kettle. The staff follows the kettle for each member to hold as if sighting along it; then to grasp as if to sing, shaking the chief's rattle four times.

When the kettle reaches the chief drummer again, the fire chief collects the cigarette butts from the base of the crescent, burns them, pours any water remaining in the kettle over the sand crescent and between the crescent and the fire. This is the actual end of the meeting.

At one meeting, however, Ben carried on some "horseplay." Holding the staff as if it were a fiddle, he scraped across it with his drumstick and sang several songs. During the last, an extremely lively one, all stood, stretched, and went outside.

Everyone is instructed to return after the morning recess: at nine or ten o'clock. The chief is in his place flanked by the other officials. Before him, west of the sand crescent and resting on a silk handkerchief, is a beaded basket. All file by, drop a contribution in the basket, shake hands

At Ben's meeting in Carson City, Nevada, the fruit was canned salad mixture and the meat was boiled hamburger balls; at Sam's meeting, near Mono Lake, California, canned peaches and boiled beef were served.

In connection with this self-sprinkling, questionably considered a baptism, the following report of Dewey Charles (Palute of Bridgeport) is interesting: Ben "threw away that old baptism for me and gave me a new one. One Sunday morning after meeting he prayed over me and sprinkled water on my head and said that was a real baptism in the peyote religion and was better than the one I had before. Jim Street is the only other member that I know Ben baptized."